

## Graduated Driver Licensing Laws History and Trends

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### Structure of driver licensing laws

The GDL revolution has not changed the structure of licensing laws

#### The fundamentals

- ♦ The U.S. Constitution provides that powers not granted the federal government, reside with the states.
- ♦ Driver licensing is a state function and will remain so.
- ♦ The federal government can influence states with research and with financial incentives and penalties. It cannot dictate policy.

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### Organization of licensing laws

Every licensing system must address the same fundamental issues

#### Licensing laws answer 6 basic questions:

- ♦ Who must be licensed?
- ♦ Who needn't be licensed?
- ♦ Who can't be licensed?
- ♦ What is required to establish an applicant's eligibility and fitness to be licensed?
- ♦ Under what circumstances can the license be taken away or restricted?
- ♦ What procedures are used to make licensing decisions?

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### Issuing the driver's license

- ♦ *Who must be licensed to drive in the state?* State residents.
- ♦ *Who need not be licensed to drive?* Nonresidents who possess a valid license elsewhere.
- ♦ *Who may not be licensed?* Persons who are not deemed by the legislature to be capable of driving safely.

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### How GDL provisions fit into pre-existing law

The law has always had provisions for young teens

- ♦ Typically, the minimum driving age is in the section describing who may not be licensed.
- ♦ With few exceptions, the minimum license age is 18.
- ♦ Decades before GDL, people younger than 18 have been licensed under exceptions for young teens.
- ♦ GDL proponents amended the "young teen" exceptions, adding provisions designed to protect young drivers while they acquire driving experience.

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### Summary of U.S. licensing laws

1995

#### Learner's permit

- ♦ entry age 14-16, 6 mo.
- ♦ not required in 21 states
- ♦ 11 states had a mandatory learner's permit holding period ranging from 14-90 days
- ♦ minimal requirements for supervising driver (often any licensed driver)
- ♦ no practice driving requirements

#### Initial license

- ♦ entry age 14-17
- ♦ nighttime restrictions in 9 states
- ♦ unsupervised driving permitted 24/7 immediately after licensure at age 15 in 3 states; at 16 in 37 states; and at 17 in one state

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## What is GDL?

GDL is a set of key elements designed to protect young drivers *before* they hurt themselves or others by phasing in full driving privileges, ensuring a significant learner's phase and limiting high risk driving in an initial license phase.

Before Florida enacted the first GDL in 1996,

- ♦ young teens were licensed to drive unsupervised anytime and under any conditions without a guarantee they'd had any significant driving experience, and
- ♦ driver control procedures, that were triggered by tickets and crashes, were the only statutory tools available to protect young drivers.

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## GDL stages

- ♦ Graduated licensing systems have three stages:
  - A supervised learner's stage
  - An intermediate stage during which high risk driving situations are limited except under supervision
  - A license with full privileges
- ♦ As of May, 2006, three-stage licensing systems have been enacted in 45 states and DC.

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## Optimal criteria for graduated licensing laws

### Learner's phase

- ♦ Minimum of six months beginning no sooner than 16
- ♦ 30 – 50 hours of certified driving, some at night

### Intermediate phase

- ♦ A nighttime driving restriction starting no later than 9 or 10 p.m.
- ♦ A passenger restriction allowing no more than 1 young passenger

### Minimum age eligible for full license

- ♦ At least one year after start of intermediate phase, preferably at age 18

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### GDL: A system of interrelated provisions

Minimum ages, holding periods, and permit expiration dates collectively affect age of initial licensure

- ♦ Where the permit and license ages are the same, mandatory permit holding periods will delay licensure.
- ♦ Where the difference between the permit and license age is greater than the permit holding period, many permit holders will have held the permit the required time before they reach the license age.
- ♦ Where the difference between the minimum ages is the same as the permit holding period, many permit holders will reach the license age before having held the permit the required time.
- ♦ Permit expiration dates vary widely; short permit terms encourage early licensure.

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### When did GDL provisions go into effect?

effective year	learner's provisions		intermediate license restrictions		
	holding period	practice driving	night driving	passenger	cell phone
1995 or earlier	11		9		
1996-1997	6	2	5	1	
1998-1999	11	13	9	5	
2000-2001	13	12	10	11	
2002	3	3	2	4	1
2003	1	3	1	3	1
2004				1	
2005		4	5	6	7
2006	1	2	3	3	2

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### Learner's permit, 1995 vs. 2006

March 2006

minimum learner's age	number of states	
	1995	2006
< 15	7	9
15	25	23
> 15 < 16	9	11
16	9	7
mandatory learner's holding period		
none	39	2
≤ 3 mo.	11	4
4-5 mo.	0	3
6 mo.	0	35
9 mo.	0	1
12 mo.	0	5
cell phones banned	0	11

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### Initial license 1995 vs. 2006 March 2006

driving restrictions	number of states	
	1995	2006
no restriction on night driving	41	6
no unsupervised driving after 9 or 10 p.m.	4	8
no unsupervised driving after 11 or later	5	36
no restriction on passengers	50	16
no passengers allowed	0	14
no more than 1 passenger	0	15
no more than 2 passengers	0	3
no more than 3 passengers	0	2
cell phones prohibited	0	11

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### Recent changes in young driver licensing laws 2005-2006 changes

	number of states
increased or added supervised driving	7
increased or added nighttime restrictions	7
increased or added passenger restrictions	10
banned cell phone use	9

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### Time in GDL

Some states give teens plenty of time to complete initial license requirements; others do not

	learner's age	learner's expires after	holding period	initial license age
Alabama	15	4 yrs.	6 mo.	16
Arkansas	14	6 mo.	6 mo.	16
New Mexico	15	6 mo.	6 mo.	15, 6 mo.

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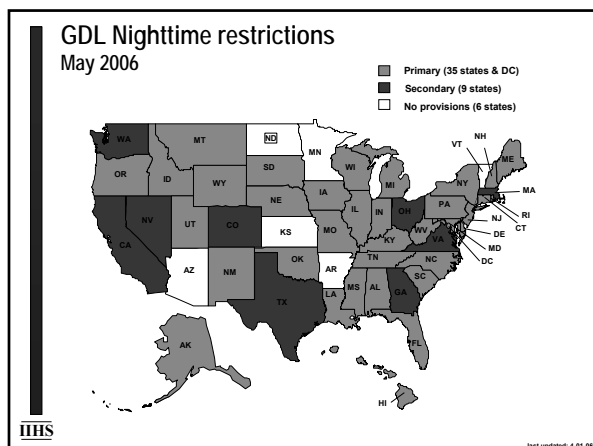
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### IIHS evaluation of GDL

A point system designed to credit 3-stage systems, distinguishing among stronger and weaker provisions

learner's entry age	1 point for learner's entry age of 16
learner's holding period	2 points for $\geq 6$ mo.; 1 point for 3-5 mo.; none for $<3$ mo.
practice driving certification	1 point for $\geq 30$ hrs.; none for less than 30 hrs.
night driving restriction	2 points for 9 or 10 p.m.; 1 point for after 10 p.m.
passenger restriction	2 points for $\leq 1$ underage passenger; 1 for 2 passengers; none for 3
duration of restrictions	1 point if difference between minimum unrestricted license age and minimum intermediate license age is $\geq 12$ mo.

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### IIHS Evaluation of GDL (continued)

	points
good	6 or more points
fair	4 or 5 points
marginal	2 or 3 points
poor	less than 2 points

Regardless of point totals, no state was rated above "marginal" if intermediate license holders could be younger than 16 or if it allows unrestricted driving before age 16, 6 months.

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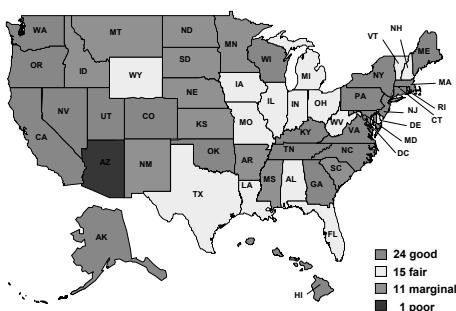
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### Licensing systems by strength of graduated licensing features May 2006



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### Minimum age for unrestricted driving, May 2006 Varies according to restriction

	duration of restrictions		issues for consideration when drafting restrictions
	night driving	passenger	
until 18	9	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some states end restrictions at an age certain; others after the passage of time or age certain, whichever occurs first.</li> <li>Careful drafting is needed.</li> <li>Nighttime restrictions that begin early often end early.</li> <li>Night driving restrictions start earlier for younger teens and later for older teens in some states.</li> </ul>
>12 mo.	3	0	
12 mo.	20	12	
9 mo.	1	1	
6 mo.	11	15	
5 mo.	0	1	
3 mo.	0	2	

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<b>Graduated Licensing: A Blueprint for North America, (DHS, June 2004) PDF</b>				
<b>Recognizing Teenage Drivers (PDF)</b>				
<b>Facts about young drivers and the licensing programs that protect them while learning to drive.</b>				
<b>FAQs:</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teenagers: Graduated Driver Licensing HTML   PDF in brochure format, a joint DHS and NHTSA publication</li> <li>Teenagers: General HTML</li> <li>Underage Drinking HTML</li> </ul>				
<b>Fatalities Data: Teenagers (HTML and PDF)</b>				
<b>Licensing Systems for Young Drivers (HTML)</b>				
Licensing requirements for North America in table format.				
<b>How effective laws measure up (HTML)</b>				
The Institute rates the states on young driver licensing laws, as well as other highway safety laws.				
<b>Educational video:</b>				
Young Drivers: The high-risk years (DHS #HS, 1997, 10 min., sound, 16 minutes) Car crashes are the number one killer of teenagers, and the risk is much greater for 16 year-olds than for other teens. This video documents the problem, describes a program that's saving young people's lives, and what other parents can do to minimize the risk for their children.				
<b>Research paper (PDF)</b>				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teenage Passengers in Motor Vehicle Crashes: A Summary of Current Research, <i>Alan F. Williams, December 2001</i>. An DHS publication in PDF format only. Most studies of motor vehicle crashes involving young people focus on drivers, however, much of the problem involves young passengers. This report summarizes the current state of knowledge concerning teenage passengers and motor vehicle crashes. The report includes information on the nature of the problem, the potential for reduction in teenage passenger deaths, and the effectiveness of measures to reduce teenage passenger deaths. The report also includes information on the effectiveness of measures to reduce teenage passenger deaths and passengers, and the effects of emergency assistance in graduated licensing programs.</li> </ul>				

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STATE YOUNG DRIVER LICENSING SUMMARY: GEORGIA 

Consent of a parent or guardian is required for a minor to be licensed. At any time the person who consented can revoke the consent, and the permit or license will be cancelled.

To get an instruction permit you must:

- be at least 15
- pass a written test

**After getting an instruction permit you may:**

- not drive unless supervised

Until 7/1/2006, to get a driver's license you must:



- Be at least 16
- hold an instruction permit at least 1 year
- drive at least 40 hours, 6 of them at night, while supervised; if completed driver education at least 20 hours, 6 of them at night, while supervised

**As of 7/1/2006, to get a driver's license you must:**

- be at least 16
- hold an instruction permit at least 1 year
- drive at least 40 hours, 6 of them at night, while supervised
- complete driver education if you are not yet 17







For more information:

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